

Drinking Water Source Protection and the Voluntary Action Program

Ohio's environmental regulations help protect drinking water quality by ensuring proper contamination cleanup.

Who regulates these activities?

Ohio EPA's Division of Drinking and Ground Waters (DDAGW) regulates public water systems. DDAGW also administers the Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) program, which determines the protection area surrounding a drinking water source. Ohio EPA has evaluated all Ohio public water systems to identify and outline these protection areas.

Ohio EPA's Division of Environmental Response and Revitalization (DERR) regulates the voluntary cleanup of contaminated properties, including locations within a drinking water source protection area.

What is a voluntary cleanup?

DERR's Voluntary Action Program (VAP) gives businesses and individuals a way to investigate possible environmental contamination, clean it up if necessary and receive confirmation from the state that the property is clean.

If a volunteer (an individual or business) wants to clean up a contaminated property, it may be done following specific standards developed by Ohio EPA. The volunteer may request to be released from further investigation and cleanup responsibility following completion of the cleanup.

Investigating the surrounding area

The assessment process includes a determination of whether cleanup is needed. If cleanup is required, the volunteer will determine what activities will be necessary for the cleanup to meet Ohio EPA's standards based on the ultimate land use.

Important ground water resources

Critical resource ground waters are highly productive aquifers being used or having the potential to be used as the source of water for industrial, agricultural and potable purposes. Class A ground waters are less productive aquifers that are currently being used as sources of drinking water.

If contamination is determined to be present in these ground water resources, the impacted ground water is addressed to ensure, at a minimum, the ground water source meets established standards found in the Safe Drinking Water Act. However, the water source does not have to meet these standards if the site receives an urban setting designation.

Urban setting designation

Urban setting designations are generally made in areas where ground water is contaminated with chemicals due to prior industrial or commercial activities. The potential or known contamination from these activities poses no perceptible risk to the community because the ground water is not being used for drinking water, nor will it be used in the foreseeable future. Only a person licensed through VAP to perform cleanups (a certified professional) may request a site to be given an urban setting designation.

The designation may be requested for a property located within a source water protection area or within one-half mile from the community water system's potable water supply well. For the request to be granted, the community water system owner must have an endorsed drinking water source protection plan and have consented to the urban setting designation in writing. The community water system's drinking water source protection plan must address the existence of an urban setting designation.



Under Ohio's Voluntary Action Program, the protection area for a community water system is an important factor in ensuring that cleanup can protect the public from exposure to harmful chemicals. (Photo source: Ohio EPA).

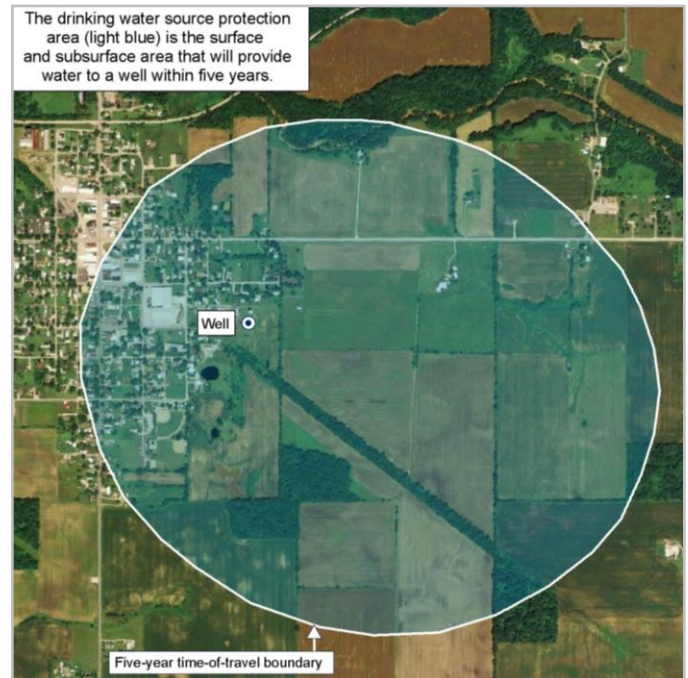
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How do these practices protect drinking water?

Accurate, detailed information is needed to understand the risk posed by contaminated properties with varying operations. Determining the site's location in relation to the source water protection area provides some of the necessary data to ensure cleanup can protect the public from exposure to harmful chemicals.

Where are drinking water source protection areas?

To determine if an existing or proposed facility is located within a drinking water source protection area, Ohio EPA has developed a mapping application that will enable you to locate source water protection areas. The application is available online as a link on the SWAP webpage at epa.ohio.gov/ddagw. You can also contact Ohio EPA's SWAP program by emailing us at the address listed below. Please include the location of the existing or proposed facility (a map showing the location is best), the reason for your request (such as: VAP property assessment), and your contact information, including your email address.



Additional Information

- Ohio's Voluntary Action Program, epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/environmental-response-revitalization.
- Voluntary Action Program fact sheets, epa.ohio.gov/static/Portals/30/vap/docs/Fact%20Sheet.pdf.
- Voluntary Action Program Rules, Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 3745-300, epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/environmental-response-revitalization/regulations/effective-rules.

Contact

For more information, contact Ohio EPA's Division of Drinking and Ground Waters, Source Water Assessment and Protection program, at (614) 644-2752, or email whp@epa.ohio.gov. Visit the SWAP webpage at epa.ohio.gov/ddagw.

This fact sheet is intended to provide an overview of this program as it relates to drinking water source protection and the SWAP program. The activities or structures described have additional restrictions not discussed in this document. When investigating state or federal programs for information about source water protection, please consult with staff from that particular program for the most complete and current information.